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**Naabik'iyátí' Committee approves enabling
legislation to implement a 911 emergency response system**

WINDOW ROCK – During a special meeting held on Monday afternoon, Naabik'iyátí' Committee members approved Legislation No. 0212-13, to amend Title 2 and Title 21 of the Navajo Nation Code to authorize the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission to implement and manage a 911 emergency response system within the Navajo Nation.

Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels), legislation co-sponsor, presented the legislation and asked for support to begin the long-awaited establishment of a 911-system.

“Many of our rural communities do not have access to 911 services and we need to begin this process to save lives,” said Delegate Hale.

According to the legislation, emergency calls are currently handled through administrative telephone lines that do not identify the caller and do not provide their address, making it difficult for first responders to locate victims in an emergency.

Also speaking in support of the legislation was Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat), who offered clarification regarding questions over whether the legislation was a duplication of a previous legislation brought before the 21st Council.

“That resolution was basically identifying [NNTRC] to help coordinate,” explained Delegate Shepherd. “Now we want to take it to the next step which is giving them the authority to manage and implement this system.”

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) addressed the need for cell phone towers to provide phone services, specifically for the elderly, living in remote areas.

“If we do the bond finance, we should put a bunch of money in there for towers that Navajo Nation will own,” said Delegate Tsosie. “You see the United States owning towers, the state of New Mexico owning towers, and we need to do the same for these types of communications. “

Delegate Tsosie urged his committee colleagues to work beyond the enabling legislation and to produce tangible results.

“The true needs of Navajo people are not being tended to. Instead we’re funding more stipends, rather than funding these types of set-ups,” said Delegate Tsosie. “These aren’t cheap, they’re going to cost money, but it is worth it to protect Navajo People in time of emergencies.”

After nearly an hour of discussion, Naabik’iyáti’ Committee members voted to approve the legislation with a vote of 11-0.

Legislation No. 0212-13 now moves on to the Navajo Nation Council for final consideration.

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